

Meander Quarterly

Newsletter of Evolutionary Anarchists

Volume 7, Number 1

Liberty, Equality, Cooperation, Respect for Nature

April 1997

Welcome to another issue of the *Meander Quarterly*. Once again the torch has been passed and the Quarterly has another editor in its long chain of guest editors. The editor for the next four issues will be me, Chuck Munson, sometime editor of *Practical Anarchy* zine and custodian of the Mid-Atlantic Infoshop Pages (on the World Wide Web).

I would like to apologize for the long period of time since the last issue. The zine editing responsibilities were taken on by me during a time in my life where I was looking for a new job and was suffering from creative burnout. Now that those things are behind me, I hope to get this out on a regular basis during my tenure as editor.

The baton has been passed to me from Brendan Conley, who has edited the previous four issues. This zine is a kind of anomaly in the zine world—a zine that migrates among a pool of editors. Some zines are put together by collectives, but very few that I have seen work the way this one does. A decision was made somewhat collectively by the members of AGEA that it was my turn to edit the *MQ*. This is my first go at it, but I've been getting copies of the zine since its inception (more on our history later).

Now that I sit down to work on this issue, several things occur to me. How does the numbering scheme work? Is this issue 6:5? or issue 7:1? Do the volumes roll over with the change in calendar year or with a change in editorship? Oops, the librarian side of me has taken over. I'll try and maintain the "style" the *MQ* has roughly followed over the years, but I won't guarantee anything!

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MQ

It certainly has been a long Meander! Where have we been in the last 7 years? How many editors? What have we debated? I've been getting this zine since its inception so I will attempt to outline a history of the *Meander Quarterly*.

The *MQ* didn't actually start out as the *Meander Quarterly*. In the beginning, it was a series of unnamed letters that Ed Stamm started sending out to various folks after the dissolution of the *SRAF Bulletin* in the late 80s. I believe that *SRAF* stood for *Social Revolutionary Anarchist Federation*. The *SRAF Bulletin* was basically a zine full of letters that were collated and mailed out to anarchists and anti-authoritarians around the world. The responsibility for collating and mailing out issues rotated on a regular basis. The *Bulletin* was a precursor to the discussion lists that exist on the Internet such as the *anarchy-list*.

Editors have included:

Ed Stamm	1988-1989
Mike Gunderloy	1989-1990
Carl Bettis	1990 [called the <i>Dilatory Meander</i>]
Erik Riese	1991-1992
Ed Stamm	1993-1994
Brendan Conley	1994-1995
Chuck Munson	1995-

Each editor has placed their stamp on the look, feel and content of the *MQ*. In fact, the *Meander* has undergone so many format changes it has become an archivist's nightmare. Some issues are full letter size and some are letter size folded over. The frequency of publication has widely fluctuated, with there being a hiatus for over a year since the last issue was published. The layout style has changed with each editor, the flavors ranging from tight

next page

computer-controlled layout to free-form paste-up. Issues published by Ed have typically included a cute cartoon from the New Yorker magazine. Other editors have added their artistic tastes.

The content has ranged with each editor, but there have been some consistent "departments." The most consistent feature has been the letters section, with zine reviews coming in a close second. Other features typically include news from the anarchist movement and weird news from the world of current events. The **MQ** has always had the feel of a laid-back discussion zine. It never has come across as a serious theory-based publication. The letters section is a relic of the origins of the **Meander**, as well as the prevalence of letters sections in the anarchist press. Anarchists find that a free exchange of ideas is important and have tried to reflect this idea in their publications.

While Internet discussion lists and bulletin boards have largely eclipsed the letters section in most zines as the locus of day-to-day anarchist communication, these printed discussions still are important to those without access to email. They are also important as a means of documenting important debates and issues as they unfold in the movement. If one takes a look at the April 1993 issue of the **Meander**, you can get a good look at what I am talking about. One of the hot topics was the recent L.A. riots, or rebellion as some characterize it. A reader wondered if the event was a constructive example of anarchy or not. The writer concluded that they weren't a positive way to effect change. Other letters discussed concepts in practical anarchy and what kind of projects would be worth pursuing. One letter was a response to another letter on whether **Anarchy:AJODA** magazine was justified in giving space to discussing pedophilia. This debate raged in the anarchist movement for several years, mainly because of **Anarchy's** policy of printing ALL letters sent to it. Another letter touched on the ever-controversial Bob Black. This issue had an article on "Social Anarchism."

Most of the content and letters that have appeared in the **MQ** have come from the members of *The Affinity Group of Evolutionary Anarchists*, which is the collective that "sponsors" the **Meander**. Membership in AGEA is international—information on how to join is provided elsewhere in this issue. The **Meander** has some loyal readers who aren't part of the collective but send in letters on a regular basis.

What else have we seen in the pages of the **MQ**? In the October 1991 issue, Ed sent a long account of his trip to Poland. The August 1994 issue included reports on May Day events that happened around the world. In this issue we also started to learn more about the Zapatistas and the government harassment of a Food Not Bombs activist in San Francisco. Jumping back to June 1990, we had the pleasure of getting a letter from Hakim Bey on the responses to his piece on "Kop Kultur." Ed lets us know how the reading/meeting room he was organizing in Lawrence, Kansas was doing (it was "working out pretty well"). We actually got a double dose of "Ed's World" in that issue, so we were VERY up to speed on what was happening in Lawrence. Going all the way back to the October 1988 issue, the primordial **MQ** ooze, we get a very early installment

of Ed's World, where he lamented the shittiness of temping. Who could have said back then that Ed would be a precursor of all these temp work zines being published today?

The thing that really strikes me as I look back through the **Meander Quarterly** archive is that most people get their anarchy from experience, not theory. Throughout the letters and articles there is an awareness of how the system fucks people over and the need to find practical ways to build a better alternative. The **Meander Quarterly** is a tribute to the idea that if people can talk to each other as equals and organize themselves, they CAN change society.

• Chuck Munson

Note from Editor to AGEA Members

Brendan sent me a big package which contained some copies of the last issue, the mailing list, and an almost complete archival set of back issues. Thanks Brendan! Almost immediately I started getting mail addressed to the zine (thanks to Brendan putting obvious change of address information on issue 6:4).

But the transition has not been without its problems. While I'm aware that this is a zine and not Newsweek, I have decided that some of the sloppy management of this publication has to cease, in order for this project to continue. When I got the **MQ** materials from Brendan, I also inherited a rather large mailing list. Now I don't know if Brendan himself inherited this unwieldy list, but it is obvious that some trimming is needed. There is no indication on the list as to who are subscribers, so my first priority with this issue is to get it out to AGEA member and then to as many people on the list as possible. Future editors take note: When you hand the editorship of the zine over to a new person, please be sure that subscribers on the mailing list are clearly indicated. The next person shouldn't have to shell out their meager finances to send out complementary subscriptions to YOUR friends.

Deadline for next issue: **July 1**

Next issue will be printed in late July

Meander Quarterly

Newsletter of Evolutionary Anarchists

Liberty, Equality, Cooperation, Respect for Nature

\$1.00 donation suggested. Please send us letters, news, and articles.

Anti-Copyright except where noted.

Back issues are not available.

All correspondence should be sent to:

Chuck Munson

PO Box 179

College Park, MD 20741-0179

Submissions should be either typed or sent on a floppy disk or sent via email. Our email address is chuck0@geocities.com.

Affinity Group of Evolutionary Anarchists (AGEA)

El Grupo de Afinidad de Anarquistas Evolucionarios
O Grupo de Afinidade de Anarquistas Evolucionarios
Grupa Sympatykow Rozwoju Anarchizmu

AGEA is an address exchange network linking individuals who favor education and self-organization as the preferred methods of achieving a voluntary, egalitarian and cooperative society.

To join the network, send mail to:
Ed Stamm
PO Box 1402
Lawrence, KS 66044-8402 USA

Meander Quarterly is on the Internet!

Back issues online

New Home Page for Affinity Group of Evolutionary Anarchists:

<http://burn.ucsd.edu/~mai/agea.html>

Includes some back issues of *The Meander Quarterly*, as well as an electronic version of the AGEA pamphlet, "Consent or Coercion."

Bootlicking Notes

• *Frederick, MD.* Respect for the flag-lowering ceremony has flagged at an Army base here. Soldiers and civilians have been ducking behind buildings to avoid the daily ceremony—some have even shouted obscenities at others who stopped for the ceremony. Officers have been asked to issue citations, good for patriotic counseling sessions, to those who violate the new flag respect rules.

• *Kansas City, MO.* Last Fall local police decided to crack-down on drunk drivers, so they set up a sobriety checkpoint on a local interstate highway, right after a night football game by the local pro franchise. Motorists were irate. The game ended at 11:42 p.m. and some people didn't get home until 2:30 a.m. Bad cop. No donut.



Wooden Shoe Bookstore in Philadelphia Burns

Philadelphia, PA, USA
February 12, 1997

This is a sad and quick note to inform relevant parties of the early morning fire that destroyed Philadelphia's Wooden Shoe Books and Records today.

Wooden Shoe is a collectively run bookstore that has provided the region with anarchist texts and sundry other materials for twenty years. The cause of the fire is presumed to be electrical, from the back storage room of the

store, which was located in a basement on South 20th Street in Center City, Philadelphia.

It looks like little will be salvagable. The store is insured, so we can expect some compensation sooner or later. However, it is anticipated that significant fundraising will be necessary to move to a new location. We don't suspect arson or foul play at this time.

This is all unofficial, from Julie, a former collective member who arrived at the location at 10 am this morning along with Albo, who has been a Shoe staffer for about 15 years. The fire was out at that time, but steam was still billowing from what used to be the front window. The recently-closed hairdresser's on the first floor was also destroyed. The two stories of apartments above were smoke and water damaged, and all their windows were busted out, but they seem more salvagable. Albo and Mimi were going to go in to see what they could rescue from the shop, since the water level had gone down to only a foot deep. The fire department has not yet issued any official proclamation about the cause of the fire.

The only good news (besides the insurance) is that the fire really fucked with rush hour traffic, significantly delaying the time it took to drive to a lousy center city job. It was a 4 alarm fire. Also, it's a little ironic that it happened on Ash Wednesday.

I will keep people posted on any fundraising efforts or other plans. If you are especially interested in helping out, or want me to give a message to collective members, write back or call me at 215-985-4448 (work) or 215-474-6459 (home.) Also, please help spread this message to people who may want to know.

yours in struggle, julie
Julie Davids (jdavids@critpath.org)

Please send contributions to:

Wooden Shoe

c/o A Space

4722 Baltimore Avenue

Philadelphia, PA 19143 USA

for more info: (215) 569-2477 box #9

Second Annual Bay Area Anarchist Book Fair

San Francisco County Fair Building in Golden Gate Park
March 29th, 1997

On Saturday, March 29, 1997, anarchists and other bibliophiles gathered from around the world in San Francisco for the Second Annual Bay Area Anarchist Book Fair. Bound Together Books, a San Francisco anarchist collective bookstore, sponsored the event. While the focus was on books, there were also speakers and an art show.

I really enjoyed the Fair. I was there as an exhibitor for Spunk Press, an online anarchist archive. We had a demo of the full archive set up on a laptop. Folks surfed our archive and picked

up our flyers. Spunk has done demos at other anarchist book fairs, including a recent one in the U.K.

There were around 40 vendors, which ranged from anarchist book distributors to infoshops to used bookstores. Who was there? There were tables from AK Press (anarchist book distributor), Bound Together Books (anarchist bookstore on Haight St.), Slingshot (infoshop in Berkeley), *Anarchy* magazine, The Autonomous Zone (Chicago infoshop), E.G. Smith (distributors), Blackout Books (New York), Loompanics (infamous distributors), City Lights Books, Food Not Bombs, Free Radio Berkley (pirate radio), Left Bank Books and Distribution (anarchist bookstore in Seattle), Spunk Press, Planet Drum, III Publishing, *Black Autonomy* magazine, *Flatland* magazine, The Kate Sharpley Library (U.K.), hemp activists, several zines and several other bookstores. I had heard complaints that last year's Fair had too many non-anarchist tables, but my impression was that anarchist-related tables predominated at this event.

Several thousand visited during the 8 hours the Fair was open. There were a lot of punks among the visitors, but I think the Fair had a wide range of attendees. I'm sure that several hundred just dropped in because it was a nice day and they were visiting the park.

There were speakers who spoke in an auditorium next to the main room. This auditorium also included an art fair and the cafe (vegan pizza, eggplant sandwiches, microbrew, wine ... all catered). Speakers included Carol Queen (sex positive radical — I bought her book), Harry Hay (a founder of the modern gay movement), J.G. Eccarius (Last Days of Christ the Vampire), Jane Doe (Anarchist Farm), California American Indian Movement activist Carol Standing Elk, Lorenzo Komboa Ervin, and Jello Biafra. There were about 50 people consistently for the speakers and several hundred for Jello. Artists being shown included Freddie Baer, Johann Humyn Being, John Yates, Winston Smith, and others.

The Spunk table was sandwiched between the Slingshot table and the *Anarchy* magazine table. Slingshot was doing a brisk business selling their "organizers," t-shirts, and patches. The patches were so popular that they kept spilling over onto our table. Patches are these little silk-screened cloth things that punks sew on their jackets. They also sold out of their "Smash TV" t-shirts. I bought a "Free Radio Berkley" t-shirt, but was disappointed that they didn't have my size for the "Rent is theft" shirt.

Anarchy:AJODA magazine has a new issue out. They also had new t-shirts designed by James Koehnline and they've published a new Bob Black book, which is critical of Murray Bookchin.

The Fair and other informal events held during the weekend created the atmosphere of a mini-gathering, sans workshops. I got to see friends that I'd only known on email, as well as old friends and new ones. I got a chance to meet archivists from the Kate Sharpley Library, the Labadie Collection, and the Anarchy Archives in Massachusetts.

All in all a very exciting and intellectually stimulating event. Let's hope they do it again next year.

• **Chuck0 (chuck0@geocities.com)**

For more info on the fair:
<http://burn.ucsd.edu/~mai/sanfranfair.html>

Spunk Press:
<http://www.spunk.org/>

AK Press:

<http://www.akpress.org/>

Left Bank:
<http://www.eskimo.com/~jonkonnu/catalog.html>

E.G. Smith:
<http://www.infinet.com/~egsmith/>

Active Resistance - Chicago - August 1996

"Don't go into the pen!!!"
"What's for dinner at the Ballroom today?"
"Damn, security is certainly tight at this conference"
"Is that black flag verlour or black velvet?"

August 27th, 1996
by Chuck0

I just got back yesterday from spending three days at the Active Resistance Conference in Chicago. While there are still events going on this week, I thought I'd share my thoughts concerning the weekend when most of the core meetings and workshops were held.

Most of the conference participants I talked to considered the conference a success. They were impressed with the overall organization of the events. Many thanks should be expressed to the A-Zone crew and other folks for a job well done.

The conference had over 600 attendees as of Sunday. There were folks from all over North America: California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Toronto, and on and on. Active Resistance is definitely one of the bigger anarchist events of this decade.

There were almost too many events to keep track of. I spent most of my time at the workshops, the Ballroom, and hanging with friends. I made it to one rally and missed most of the Countermedia and other cultural events and attractions.

The Autonomous Zone Infoshop (located on North in the Near West side of Chicago) served as the registration facility and coordinating center for the event. The A-Zone has recently moved into this new space, which includes a library and kitchen, as well as the other furnishings befitting a meeting space. The A-Zone also contained a message board, filled mostly with requests for rides, and various sheets detailing workshop times and locations.

Most of the workshops, the core meetings, and the Free Skool took place at this old factory which was dubbed the Spice Factory (maybe it really used to be a spice factory). This three story space, which looked like it was in the middle of being re-habbed, served as the main meeting space. A black velvet flag hung from a flagpole out front. Mornings were the times for Workshops, which ranged from prison issues to labor issues to healthcare to freighthopping. The afternoon was reserved for the "Core" meetings. Free Skool workshops were held in the early evening.

The Core Meetings had to be the most interesting part of A.R. Here was an attempt by anarchists to seriously talk about certain issues for several consecutive days. I participated in the "Community Organizing" core, which included the same participants over 4+ days and met in the same area of the factory. The three-hour sessions including guest speakers such as Lorenzo Komboa Ervin, George Friday, and Tom Knoche. The rest of the sessions were devoted to brainstorming, discussions, and small group activities. One day I joined a small group which discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the Infoshop movement. Other groups talked about Critical Mass,

Food Not Bombs, and the Anarchist Black Cross. By the end of all of this we had lots of sheets of paper on the walls filled with all kinds of ideas and critiques. The conference organizers even managed to type up all these notes every night, so they could be photocopied and distributed to us during the next day's session. I've been told that all the notes from the core will be assembled into a book that will be available to all anarchist activists.

The other two cores, which I didn't attend, were "Collectives, Cooperatives, Alternative Economics" and "Building Revolutionary Movements: Education and Development." The structure of these sessions followed the framework that I discussed for the "Community Organizing" core.

It's still too early to tell what kind of effects these workshops had on the participants for the long run, but I think that many were certainly inspired by what they learned and the people they met.

Many of the social activities and all of the communal food activities were held at the "Ballroom," a big warehouse loft located several blocks from the Spice Factory. Dinner and lunch grub was cooked up by Seeds of Peace. It was very cool to see 200 anarchists lined up for food and then see them having a good time eating their dinner. There were literature tables during the meals. Participants included Perennial Bookstore of Massachusetts and Left Bank Distribution from Seattle. Some informal caucuses took place during the meals and I'm sure that many friendships were rekindled or started. The Ballroom was also home to a puppet-making area, a multimedia area, and a fun dance held on Saturday night. One of my favorite things was to go out back and sit on the train tracks and look at the Chicago skyline.

It should be mentioned that all of this took place only blocks away from the Democratic National Convention being held at the United Center. Several protest events are taking place this week in conjunction with that "Convention."

What was that about "Don't go into the pen!" that was mentioned earlier? On Sunday, many of the A.R. participants joined with some local organizations in a march to protest the war on immigrants. It wound up at the "protest pen", a fenced-in parking lot near the DNC. This has been designated by the Democratic powers as the free speech pen. Several of the local groups went into the pen, whereas the anarchists stayed out in the street until we dispersed. A wise move.

ON THE NET

by Chuck0

A round-up of interesting anarchist resources on the Internet. Point your web browser at these wonderful sites.

An Anarchist FAQ

<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/1931>

This has to be one of the more exciting theoretical anarchist projects to come along in recent years. In Internet-speak, a FAQ is short for "Frequently Asked Questions," a file maintained on a certain subject by folks interested in that subject. In this case, we have a collaborative, international project to compile a FAQ on anarchism, past and present. The impetus to create this project is the numerous people online that have been spreading distortions about anarchist theory and history. This FAQ is a factual challenge to so-called "anarcho-capitalists," "American Libertarians (like Ann Randites)," those who equate anarchy with chaos and bombs, and people who spread disinformation about the Spanish Revolution and Kronstadt.

A project still in progress, **An Anarchist FAQ** has major sections devoted to "What are the myths of capitalist econom-

ics?" and "What would an anarchist society look like?" It answers specific questions like "What kinds of green anarchism are there?" and "Why do racism and sexism exist?" and "Is state control of credit the cause of the business cycle?"

Liberty for the People

<http://tigerden.com/~berios/liberty.html>

One of my favorite web sites is this anarcho-syndicalist one which contains "Texts concerning the goal of liberty and freedom for the working class individual." Most of the texts concern syndicalism, anarcho-communism, and libertarian socialism. Be sure to check out the lengthy page devoted to "Prominent Anarchists and Left-Libertarians," which feature pictures of famous anarchists throughout history as well as capsule bios. Another nice feature of this site are the links that web coordinator Jamal Hannah maintains on libertarian organizations around the world.

Changes

The **Mid-Atlantic Infoshop** has changed addresses. It can now be found at: <http://burn.ucsd.edu/~mai/>

ZINE AND MAGAZINE REVIEWS

Reviewed by Chuck Munson

Free Society, Vol.4, no.2. "A Journal of Anarchist Theory and Action" [PO Box 35, Stuyvesant Station, New York, NY 10009 USA.]

This issue starts with several essays on Mumia Abu-Jamal, radical black journalist on death row, moves on to an article on the MOVE organization. We move on to two articles on health, with a focus on breast cancer. The major political essay is titled "*Tracing our descent: anarchism, ecology and the fight for a free society.*" It presents a rather uncritical overview of the Left Green movement and Bookchin's "social ecology" philosophies. This should interest those who feel that Bookchin has too many groupies who have forgotten that they're supposed to be anti-authoritarians. Bookchin's ongoing campaign to promote his new political philosophy and refusal to muddy himself in the activism of the anarchist movement continues to puzzle many anarchists.

Industrial Worker, March 1996. The monthly newspaper of the global anarcho-syndicalist union, the IWW. This issue has articles on black bus drivers in Chattanooga who are fighting "plantation" working conditions, A.E. Staley workers and their ongoing strike in Illinois, "Sweatshops in the Post-Fordist Economy," and many others. Includes a cartoon from Konopacki, one of the best labor cartoonists around.

Price: \$1. Subs:\$15 for 12 issues. 103 West Michigan Avenue, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197 (12 pages/newsprint/tabloid/polished)

Other Zines and Magazines Received:

Corre@ no.28 / **Noviembre 1995.** []

Discussion Bulletin no.76 / March-April 1996 [PO Box 1564, Grand Rapids, MI 49501. \$3]

The Geis Letter no. 27 / October 1995 [PO Box 11408, Portland, Oregon 97211-0408]

The New Socialist / Vol.1, no.19 [Editor: Ivan Bachur. 8132 Farnum, Warren, MI 48093-2884.]

The last issue.

People's Culture no.30 / 1995 [Editor: Fred Whitehead. Box 5224, Kansas City, KS 66119. \$15/year]

The Real Deal "Not For the Politically Correct" no.4 [Editor: Keith Robb. 1216 Lincoln Ave., Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44223-2227. \$2]

The Sixteen Page Review no.2 / September 1995 [PO Box 442219, Lawrence, Kansas 66044]

TAO Stew no.2 / December 1995 [621 Bassett Road, Bay Village, Ohio 44140]

The Voluntaryist [PO Box 1275, Gramling, South Carolina 29348]

OBITS

Larry Johnson a.k.a Ernest Mann, was murdered by his son in April of 1996. He published **Little Free Press**, a zine that featured his thoughts on living a simple life. He had been publishing **LFP** since 1969 and was a big fan of **The Meander Quarterly**. He had sent me quite a few issues of **LFP** in the months prior to his death. We will truly miss him.

Here is the review that I had written of his zine, shortly before his death:

Little Free Press, various issues. I've been reading and enjoying this little zine for years. In each issue Ernest Mann outlines his "Priceless Economic System." Mann is always interested in ways one can make one's life simpler and freer, especially from government control. Price: FREE. Subs: Pay postage for each issue, 2-3 a month. 301 S.E. 11th Street #218, Little Falls, MN 56345-3378 (4 pages/xerox/standard/DTPed)

The Unabomber's Relation to Anarchism and the Left

by Ed D'Angelo

On April 26, 1995 the **New York Times** published a letter from the Unabomber in which he claimed that he is not an isolated nut but part of a large and growing anarchist movement. On May 3, 1995 the New York Times published an editorial by Bill Weinberg stating that the Unabomber's "evocation of 'anarchism' and 'radical environmentalism' is deluded...most anarchists have long since decided that you can't blow up a social relationship. Many are committed to the principles of non-violence." On May 7, 1995 the New York Times published an article about John Zerzan, an anarchist who opposes technological society and the author of *Future Primitive*. Without giving his approval of the Unabomber's use of violence, Zerzan recognized the Unabomber as a fellow anarchist and expressed agreement with his anti-technological ideas. The editors of *Love and Rage* have published sympathetic reports of militant actions and organizations such as the Zapatistas. They are not committed to the principles of non-violence. But like Bill Weinberg they too reject the Unabomber as an anarchist. Later in the Summer *Love and Rage* published an article about the Unabomber in which the author argued that the Unabomber is not an anarchist because he acted as an individual instead of in

democratic cooperation with others. On September 19, 1995 the Washington Post published the Unabomber's 30,000 word treatise, *Industrial Society and Its Future*. Included in the Unabomber's treatise is an argument for the claim that most leftists are overly socialized neurotics. But who are "leftists?"

When we speak of leftists in this article we have in mind mainly socialists, collectivists, 'politically correct' types, feminists, gay and disability activists, animal rights activists, and the like. But not everyone associated with these movements is a leftist. What we are trying to get at in discussing leftism is not so much a movement or an ideology as a psychological type..."

On April 3, 1996 federal agents arrested a man they believe is the Unabomber. 53-year-old Theodore J. Kaczynski graduated from Harvard in 1962 and received a doctorate in mathematics from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in 1967. He taught at the rank of assistant professor for two years at the University of California at Berkeley before resigning in 1969. But at the time of his arrest he had been living alone in a remote Montana cabin without electricity or running water for twenty-five years. Both Berkeley and Ann Arbor were centers of the radical 60s counterculture during the time that Dr. Kaczynski was at those schools. It is therefore possible that he was affected by the deep alienation from modern society which characterized the 60s counterculture.

What is the Unabomber's relation to anarchism and the Left? The Unabomber sees himself as an anarchist and as part of the anarchist movement, but not as a leftist. Most anarchists seem to identify with the Left than with the Unabomber. In what follows I explain how the Unabomber's ideas resemble the ideas of the Frankfurt School of Marxism which formed the theoretical basis for the New Left of the 60s and which continue to influence many anarchists today, whether they realize it or not. Thus I am arguing that anarchists have more in common with the Unabomber than many of them would like to admit, and that the Unabomber has more in common with the left than he would like to admit.

The Unabomber's main argument is that industrial technological development necessarily requires a totalitarian organization of society which interferes with the "power process," causing psychological and social pathologies. The "power process" is the psychological process by which humans have a goal, make an autonomous effort, and reach their goal. It is interesting that although the Unabomber fervently rejects the Left, a similar argument was made thirty years ago by Herbert Marcuse, a member of the Frankfurt School and the leading theorist of the New Left of the 1960s.

The classic period of bourgeois liberalism occurred between 1815 and 1914 with the industrialization of Western Europe and the rise of the commercial middle classes following the French and American revolutions. It was an unusually peaceful time in West European history with the major European powers engaged in war with one another for only eighteen months. The "hundred years peace" was shattered by World War I and critics on both the left and the right ends of the political spectrum blamed liberalism for the debacle. On the left end of the political spectrum, the Marxists blamed the war on capitalism and the competition for limited global resources. On the right end of the political spectrum, the fascists blamed military weakness and national defeat on liberalism. Following World War I both the communists and the fascists constructed totalitarian societies radically different than the classic liberal societies of the 19th century. By the 1930s scholars in England and the United States condemned both communism and fascism as totalitarian threats to capitalism and to liberal values which capitalism had sustained throughout the hundred years peace. The progressive Marxist scholars of Germany also condemned fascism as totalitarian, but they be-

lieved that fascism was a form of monopoly capitalism which developed out of liberal capitalism, not a threat to capitalism. It wasn't until Stalin signed the Nazi-Soviet Pact in 1939 that some of these Marxists began to wonder if the Soviet Union was not also totalitarian. But even after the Second World War when Stalin's atrocities became known, many West European Marxists such as Jean Paul Sartre in France continued to support the Soviet Union. Only in the 1960s did the more progressive Frankfurt School begin to speculate about what had gone wrong with communism. In *One Dimensional Man* Marcuse suggests that technology was to blame. He argues that all technological societies, whether capitalist or communist, are necessarily totalitarian. According to Marcuse's analysis it is not an historical accident that Lenin adopted his plans for the rapid industrial development of the Soviet Union from German industry, because everywhere that technology is developed it requires the same totalitarian organization of society regardless of whether the political organization of that society is capitalist, communist, or fascist. This is why the revolution advocated by the Unabomber is not a political revolution but a war against technology.

Other members of the Frankfurt School who blamed technology for the world's social ills were Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. In *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* they argued that the technological reasoning which was developed during the scientific revolution of the 17th century, popularized during the Enlightenment of the 18th century, and implemented during the revolution of the 19th century, was inherently totalitarian and lacking moral substance. They agreed with the German sociologist Max Weber that modern industrial societies must necessarily be technically rational bureaucracies. But for them this was reason to reject modern industrial society. They attributed the atrocities of the war to the moral vacuity of industrial bureaucracies and upper middle class professionals, as Albert Speer, the former Nazi defense minister, had done in his prison diaries. And they sought to "reenchant" the world by returning to the mythic thought of pre-industrial society, as Heidegger had proposed after the war. Martin Heidegger was one of the major philosophers of the 20th century. But unlike most members of the Frankfurt School, Heidegger remained in Germany during the 30s and even supported the Nazis. After the War his thoughts took a "turn" and he developed a profound critique of technology. Marcuse and other members of the Frankfurt School were heavily influenced by Heidegger's critique of technology.

Thus, although the Unabomber may have been socially isolated, he was not an isolated "nut," unless the greatest thinkers of the 20th century can be considered to be isolated nuts. Like many anarchists today, the Unabomber belongs to a tradition of progressive socialism which learned from the totalitarian societies of the 20th century that industrial technology poses special challenges to the formation of a society of autonomous equals.

Thoughts on the Unabomber Late 1996

by Chuck Munson

As I write this, in early December of 1996, Unabomber suspect Ted Kaczynski sits in a jail cell waiting for his first trial. Jokes abound about how his prison conditions are so much more comfortable than his old cabin. Recent news reports indicate that Kaczynski may have to wait another year before he sees his first day in court. The federal authorities are pursuing their first trial against him in California, with hopes that they can convict and get a death sentence.

For the most part, Kaczynski and the Unabomber case have

been mostly out of the news. We still haven't seen an inventory of his cabin belongings, which interests me because I wonder what he was reading all those years. Anarchist books and magazines? Or more likely, a mixture of academic books and pulp 1970s sociological bestsellers.

If one compares the Unabomber Manifesto with what we know about suspect Kaczynski, several questions arise. The first that comes to mind, is that if he was such an antisocial guy during the 1960s, how did he develop his animosity towards leftists? If you've been involved in leftist or radical politics for some time and have attended one too many marathon meetings, you could see how one might develop an animosity towards activists. But since Kaczynski was so antisocial, where did he develop this animosity—books? Another question that arises is whether we should take seriously his rather run-of-the-mill social analysis given what we now know about his warped and troubled life. Certainly we should condemn his tactics, given their violent and random nature.

Whoever the Unabomber may turn out to be, he/she/they made a big mistake when they released their manifesto. This body of writing gave the FBI investigators, the public, and other experts a huge text which could be analyzed for clues. It was some of the idiosyncrasies of the manifesto which caused Ted's brother to turn him in. Prior to the publishing of the manifesto in the Washington Post and the New York Times, the FBI investigation was in shambles. After years of investigation, and millions of dollars, they weren't getting anywhere close to a suspect. The FBI was pursuing weird psychological profiles that were laughable in their stupidity.

We will find out more about Kaczynski in the next few years. The question is: Is he the right guy? If so, Why did he do it? What was he reading in his cabin?

Book Reviews

With the Peasants of Aragon by Augustin Souchy Bauer

translated by Abe Bluestein, Cienfuegos Press-Soil of Liberty, 1982.

Most of you are familiar with events in Spain between 1936 and 1939 - a democratically elected, left-leaning government, an attempted coup by right wing military officers and other reactionaries, a spontaneous socialist revolution, and a bloody, chaotic civil war in which a million people perished. While the anarchists and left socialists were making a social revolution, the bourgeois democracy of the Spanish Republic, aided by the Soviet Union, did its best to stamp it out. The end result was victory for the military dictatorship of Francisco Franco, made possible by massive assistance from Mussolini and Hitler.

During this upheaval, many areas of the region known as Aragon were collectivized or communized in various manners and to various degrees by their residents. The ideal of most of these peasants was the libertarian, or voluntary, communism advocated by the anarchist movement. Membership in these collectives was voluntary, with the "individualists" being allowed to interact and trade with the collectives on a cash or barter basis. The only restrictions were a ban on hired labor and in some cases a requirement that they share machinery if it was in short supply. In some towns a minority formed a collective, usually on land abandoned by wealthy landowners who had fled to territory controlled by the reactionaries. In other cases, the majority of residents, or even the entire town, belonged to the collective.

Production and distribution were organized in various ways. One common method was to distribute goods free of charge and

only ration or sell goods that were scarce or which had to be purchased with cash from outside the community. Most basic agricultural goods were distributed in this manner, with surpluses being bartered with other villages or sold to the cities. Some villages also set up work shops and food processing facilities. Some of the cash income was distributed to members of the community for the purchase of personal items and some was invested in tools, machinery, medicines and other goods which could not be produced locally. Teachers and doctors were hired in communities which previously did not have access to such "luxuries". And these communities were not self-sufficient islands "looking out for number one", but were linked together in a federation to coordinate production and consumption. They also donated some of their production to the militias at the front and to the hospitals and cities in the rear.

The author travelled throughout Aragon and describes the way each of the communities he visited was organized, sometimes telling the story of the its liberation and progress towards collectivization. He contrasts the voluntary and flexible nature of these self managed cooperatives to the hierarchical and authoritarian cooperatives of Soviet Union. He also describes how employers who chose to remain were absorbed into the workplace as equals, one former owner remarking that he no longer had to worry about business being good or bad since production continued steadily to meet real demand instead of fluctuating with the market. He no longer had to worry about being driven out of business or laying off his employees.

The book is preceded by the translator's recollections of Spain and his recollections of the book's author. The author, at the age of 89 when this English edition was published, also includes his remarks in an interesting forward. At the end of the book, the story of one town is told by one of its residents.

I had the feeling from time to time that this was a rose colored version of events. The book was first published in Barcelona, Spain in 1937, so I suspect the author was less than brutally honest about the difficulties and mistakes made during the transition. I certainly would like to believe that events proceeded as smoothly and in such a civil manner as the author describes, but the pessimist in me somehow doubts it. Having reread Ernest Hemingway's "For Whom the Bell Tolls" recently, it was hard for me to reconcile these two very different versions of the transformation of the Spanish countryside.

If this book is ever reprinted, a job I would love to do if I had the money, I would suggest that the publisher use a better typeface, include a better map of Aragon (showing the locations of all the villages and towns mentioned), and include another map showing where Aragon lies within Spain. Pictures of Souchy, Bluestein, and of some of the villages and inhabitants described would also be a nice touch.

• Ed Stamm

• Ed has just published a new edition of **With the Peasants of Aragon**. To get a copy send \$5.00 for each copy, or \$3.00 each for 3 or more copies to: Ed Stamm, PO Box 1402, Lawrence, KS 66044-8402.

Other Books Received:

The Third Revolution: popular movements in the revolutionary era. Volume 1. Murray Bookchin. New York: Cassell, 1996. \$19.95

Beyond Bookchin: preface for a future social ecology. David Watson. 1996. Autonomedia, PO Box 568, Williamsburgh Sta-

tion, Brooklyn, NY 11211-0568. Black & Red, PO Box 02374, Detroit, MI 48202. Fifth Estate, 4632 Second Avenue, Detroit, MI 48201.

Millenium. Hakim Bey. 1996. Autonomedia, PO Box 568, Williamsburgh Station, Brooklyn, NY 11211-0568 USA [sssemiotexte@aol.com] Garden of Delight Publications. 3 Castle Street, Dublin 2, Ireland [Glendale@indigo.ie]

Film Reviews

Incident at Oglala - The Leonard Peltier Story. Directed by Michael Apted, 1991. Narrated by Robert Redford.

A documentary about the American Indian Movement (AIM) and their occupation of Wounded Knee, their clashes with tribal chairman Dick Wilson's goon squads, and the shoot-out with FBI agents at the Pine Ridge reservation near Oglala South Dakota. Leonard Peltier is one of several AIM members interviewed in the film, along with FBI agents, government officials, jurors, witnesses, and former goon squad members. A well made documentary - highly recommended. I rented it at a mass market video store.

• Ed Stamm

Closeout Sale: Writings on Civil Disobedience and Nonviolence by Leo Tolstoy is on sale for \$10.00 + \$3.50 shipping/handling from New Society Publishers, 4527 Springfield Ave, Philadelphia PA 19143 USA.

Now is the time to pick up a copy of AGEA's pamphlet "Consent or Coercion," which has just been reprinted. Send some dollars to cover postage and printing costs to: Ed Stamm, PO Box 1402, Lawrence, KS 66044-8402, USA.

Music

Noam Chomsky "Capital Rules" / Chumbawamba live "Showbusiness!" (For a Free Humanity: For Anarchy). Double CD. AK Press, PO Box 40682, San Francisco, CA 94140 USA [email: akpress@org.org / http://www.akpress.org] Mutual Aid Recordings, PO Box 262, Berkeley, CA 94701 USA [email: cburn@vdm.com / http://www.adnc.com/web/mutual] Allied Recordings, PO Box 460683, San Francisco, CA 94146 USA [Distributed by Mordam].

SPUNK PRESS

Online Archive of Anarchist Texts and Images
<http://www.spunk.org/>

Spunk Press is an electronic archive of anarchist and related material. It is intended to educate as many people as possible about this much misunderstood approach to life and bring greater attention to its rich and often eloquent literature. Anarchism is a philosophy of contemporary relevance, emphasizing small scale production, care for the environment, equality of all

people regardless of race, gender or orientation, a meaningful democracy based in direct participation rather than representation, and people finding ways to take control of their own lives without force or coercion. We are a group with a healthy diversity of views within this context, but at the heart of them is the profound belief that social order is something that can only grow organically, out of personal liberty, mutual aid, cooperative work places and workers' associations; we strive for liberation from such superstitions as the usefulness of prisons, the legitimacy of domination by central governments or financial empires, and the need for personal repression.

Our archive contains a wide range of documents and images, from 1-page flyers to complete novels, from anarchist history to contemporary art and poetry, from accounts of anti-fascist activities to collective health programs, from protests against colonialism to anarchist humor. We carry a selection of contemporary anarchist journals, and historical works by writers such as Kropotkin, Goldman, Malatesta, and Chomsky. The archive does not include bomb making recipes or anything of the sort. Blowing things up is the business of states (as witness Hiroshima and the so-called "smart" bombs of the Gulf War). Rather, our work, to quote from the preamble to the I.W.W. Constitution, is "to build the new society within the shell of the old."

The name spunk is taken from Pippi Longstocking, a character in the books of the Swedish children's writer Astrid Lindgren. Pippi has just invented a new word, spunk, but doesn't know what it means, so she goes to find out by asking the shopkeepers if they have spunk. They don't know what it is so she has to work it out for herself. So, hey: a spunk can be anything, anything you please. We don't believe that our potentials have been pre-defined, but that we should be free to find and to realize whatever those potentials may be and to extend them as far as we can, unrestrained by prejudice, economic pressure, or the dictates of those in positions of power. The name comes only from the Swedish story, but in English it can mean "courageous, spirited, and unwilling to give up." In Australian English, it means "an attractive person." In some areas of North America, it can mean "semen," and we hear a lot of jokes about that.

Spunk Press is available on the Internet and in PC or Mac diskette form. For a catalogue or further information, write to:

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The archive can be accessed on the Internet at:

WWW: <http://www.spunk.org/>

Other inquiries can be mailed to the Spunk Editorial Collective at: spunk@lysator.liu.se

Submissions can be sent to:
spunk@spunk.org

Sample Titles

- What it is To Be A Girl In An Anarchist Boys Club
- Free Radio in France
- Is It Anarchy on the Internet?
- Libertarian Labor Review magazine
- Black Fist e-zine
- What is Communist Anarchism? by Alexander Berkman

- Anarchist Morality by Peter Kropotkin
- Patriotism, a Menace to Liberty by Emma Goldman
- The Mass Psychology of Misery by John Zerzan
- The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism by Fredy Perlman
- Babysitting is Anarchy by Mike Thain
- Let's Get Organized! by Lorenzo Komboa Ervin

Letters

The expression of our idea of a free social order in our daily living activities is the basis of our liberation. It is a cultural happening which raises out of the spirit of the people. What inspires us in our efforts is this spirit; a living resolve. With the organizational embodiment of our ideals we start the movement to a society which will afford the greatest fulfillment for all humanity.

The culture of freedom cannot be brought about by any form of coercion nor any sort of political meddling. The realm of politics is means which can only serve to build authoritarian structures which create two levels of humanity; those who are ruled and those who are ruled for. Such a social structure can be arranged in any of numerous ways, but always such a system will maintain itself through deceit, cooptation and coercion.

Our resolve has to be among ourselves to create a life-affirming social interaction through our own actions. We need to directly create community which works on a basis of free participation of all, but only all who wish. A community cannot exist if of only one mind. A free society is the result of the self-conviction of the people to foster each other's individuality. We seek to affirm the expression of all life and make the act of living a celebration of life itself. The shared gift of mutual respect is a process of daily life and is basic to community. Mutual respect must be a culture of social activity which operates through simple social processes. To bring this about we must displace the political process which empowers the state. It is the delegation of power through the political process which prevents us from being in control of our lives, that is, so long as we buy the political process.

Our prime efforts must be to do the things which bring about the social formations that are real in terms of our lives. We need not be halted by the things of the past. History is mostly a lie written by people who have intellectual attitudes. One thing we know about the past is that the people are always the ones who pay with their lives for the ambitions of those who wield social power.

We do not have time to waste on politics, religion, historical determinism and endless critiques of all that is wrong with the capitalist system. The system cannot be reformed, it is by its nature against human decency. We need to break from all the head trips and get to living. Creating social autonomy and mutual aid alternatives are our most important projects. Our personal lives are the basis of this change. Without the personal convictions to enact our ideals as a living statement, nothing can be done.

Real world skills are what wins, anarchists should become skilled at trades or professions which can be practiced independently of the wage system. Jobs which are wage work for large employers, like assembly lines, office work, and retail sales offer little chance for independence. Whereas a skill which can be sold directly creates the possibility of free-lancing real. Anarchy is a practical thing—we aim to develop reliance upon our own action and to allow the people to build self-reliance generally.

Dick Martin
Argenta, British Columbia
February 1996

An Anarchist FAQ

This begins the first part of the Meander's serialization of An Anarchist FAQ, a work that we enjoy and hope that you will like too. The FAQ is still being written, but should be finished this summer. There is hope that when it is finished, several publishers will issue print versions. For now you can find the entire FAQ as it stands, online at:

<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/1931/>

The Anarchist FAQ is the creation of many anarchists across the globe and is a classic example of the power of freedom, equality and mutual aid. If you want to contact some of those responsible, then send email to this address.

Version 3.2 - 29/01/97

Section A - What is anarchism?

Section B - Why do anarchists oppose the current system?

Section C - What are the myths of capitalist economics?

Section D - How does statism and capitalism affect society?

Section E - What do anarchists think causes ecological problems?

Section F - Is "anarcho"-capitalism a type of anarchism?

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Section A - What is Anarchism?

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Section A - What is Anarchism?

Modern civilization faces three potentially catastrophic crises: (1) social breakdown, a shorthand term for rising rates of poverty, homelessness, crime, violence, alienation, drug and alcohol abuse, social isolation, political apathy, dehumanization, the deterioration of community structures of self-help and mutual aid, etc.; (2) destruction of the planet's delicate ecosystems on which all complex forms of life depend; and (3) the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons.

Orthodox opinion, including that of Establishment "experts," mainstream media, and politicians, generally regards these crises as separable, each having its own causes and therefore capable of being dealt with on a piecemeal basis, in isolation from the other two. Obviously, however, this "orthodox" approach isn't working, since the problems in question are getting worse. Unless some better approach is taken soon, we are clearly headed for disaster, either from catastrophic war, ecological Armageddon, or a descent into urban savagery -- or all of the above.

Anarchism offers a unified and coherent way of making sense of these crises, by tracing them to a common source. This source is the principle of **hierarchical authority**, which underlies the major institutions of all "civilized" societies, whether capitalist or "communist." Anarchist analysis therefore starts from the fact that all of our major institutions are in the form of hierarchies, i.e. organizations that concentrate power at the top of a pyramidal structure, such as corporations, government bureaucracies, armies, political parties, religious organizations, universities, etc. It then goes on to show how the authoritarian relations inherent in the such hierarchies negatively affect individuals, their society, and culture. In the first part of this FAQ (**sections A - E**) we will present the anarchist analysis of hierarchical authority and its negative effects in greater detail.

It should not be thought, however, that anarchism is just a critique of modern civilization, just "negative" or "destructive." Because it is much more than that. For one thing, it is also a proposal for a free society. Emma Goldman expressed what might be called the "anarchist question" as follows: *"The problem that confronts us today. . . is how to be one's self and yet in oneness with others, to feel deeply with all human beings and still retain one's own characteristic qualities"* [**Red Emma Speaks**, pp. 133-134]. In other words, how can we create a society in which the potential for each individual is realised but not at the expense of others? In order to achieve this, anarchists envision a society in which, instead of being controlled "from the top down" through hierarchical structures of centralized power, the affairs of humanity will *"be managed by individuals or volun-*

tary associations" [Ben Tucker, **Anarchist Reader**, p. 149]. Later sections of the FAQ (sections I and J) will describe anarchism's positive proposals for organizing society in this way, "from the bottom up." However, some of the constructive core of anarchism will be seen even in the earlier sections.

As Clifford Harper elegantly puts it, *"Like all great ideas, anarchism is pretty simple when you get down to it -- human beings are at their best when they are living free of authority, deciding things among themselves rather than being ordered about."* [Anarchy: A Graphic Guide, p. vii]. Due to their desire to maximise individual and therefore social freedom, anarchists wish to dismantle all institutions that repress people.

"Common to all Anarchists is the desire to free society of all political and social coercive institutions which stand in the way of the development of a free humanity" [Rudolf Rocker, **Anarcho-Syndicalism**]

As we'll see, all such institutions are hierarchies, and their repressive nature stems directly from their hierarchical form.

Anarchism is a socioeconomic and political theory, but not an ideology. The difference is **very** important. Basically, theory means you have ideas; an ideology means ideas have you. Anarchism is a body of ideas, but they are flexible, in a constant state of evolution and flux, and open to modification in light of new data. As society changes and develops, so does anarchism. An ideology, in contrast, is a set of "fixed" ideas which people believe dogmatically, usually ignoring reality or "changing" it so as to fit with the ideology, which is (by definition) correct. All such "fixed" ideas are the source of tyranny and contradiction, leading to attempts to make everyone fit onto a Procrustean Bed. This will be true regardless of the ideology in question -- Leninism, Objectivism, "Libertarianism," or whatever -- all will all have the same effect: the destruction of real individuals in the name of a doctrine, a doctrine that usually serves the interest of some ruling elite. Or, as Mikhail Bakunin states it:

"Until now all human history has been only a perpetual and bloody immolation of millions of poor human beings in honor of some pitiless abstraction -- God, country, power of state, national honor, historical rights, judicial rights, political liberty, public welfare".

Dogmas are static and deathlike in their rigidity, often the work of some dead "prophet," religious or secular, whose followers erect his or her ideas into an idol, immutable as stone. Anarchists want the living to bury the dead so that the living can get on with their lives. The living should rule the dead, not vice versa. Ideologies are the nemesis of critical thinking and consequently of freedom, providing a book of rules and "answers" which relieve us of the "burden" of thinking for ourselves.

In producing this FAQ on anarchism it is not our intention to give you the "correct" answers or a new rule book. We will explain a bit about what anarchism has been in the past, but we will focus more on its modern forms and why **we** are anarchists today. The FAQ is an attempt to provoke thought and analysis on your part. If you looking for a new ideology, then sorry, anarchism is not for you.

While anarchists try to be realistic and practical, we are not "reasonable" people. "Reasonable" people uncritically accept what the "experts" and "authorities" tell them is true, and so they will always remain slaves! Anarchists know that, as Bakunin wrote:

"[a] person is strong only when he stands upon his own truth, when he speaks and acts from his deepest convictions. Then, whatever the situation he may be in, he always knows what he must say and do. He may fall, but he cannot bring shame upon himself or his causes" [Statism and Anarchy].

What Bakunin describes is the power of independent thought, which is the power of freedom. We encourage you not to be "reasonable," not to accept what others tell you, but to think and act for yourself!

One last point: to state the obvious, this is **not** the final word on anarchism. Many anarchists will disagree with much that is written here, but this is to be expected when people think for themselves. All we wish to do

is indicate the **basic** ideas of anarchism and give our analysis of certain topics based on how we understand and apply these ideas. We are sure, however, that all anarchists will agree with the core ideas we present, even if they may disagree with our application of them here and there.

A.1 What is anarchism?

"Anarchism" and "anarchy" are undoubtedly the most misrepresented ideas in political theory. Generally, the words are used to mean "chaos" or "without order," and so, by implication, anarchists desire social chaos and a return to the "laws of the jungle."

This process of misrepresentation is not without historical parallel. For example, in countries which have considered government by one person (monarchy) necessary, the words "republic" or "democracy" have been used precisely like "anarchy," to imply disorder and confusion. Those with a vested interest in preserving the status quo will obviously wish to imply that opposition to the current system cannot work in practice, and that a new form of society will only lead to chaos. Or, as Errico Malatesta expresses it:

"If it is believed that government is necessary and that without government there must be disorder and confusion, it is natural and logical to suppose that anarchy, which signifies absence of government, must also mean absence of order." [Anarchy].

Anarchists want to change this "commonsense" idea of "anarchy," so people will see that government and other hierarchical social relationships are both harmful **and** unnecessary. For when *"opinion is changed, and the public are convinced that government is not necessary, but extremely harmful, the word 'anarchy', precisely because it signifies 'without government,' will become equal to saying 'natural order, harmony of needs and interests of all, complete liberty with complete solidarity."* [Ibid.].

This FAQ is part of the process of changing the commonsense idea of anarchy.

A.1.1 What does "anarchy" mean?

The word "anarchy" is from Greek, prefix **a**, meaning "not," "the want of," "the absence of," or "the lack of", plus **archos**, meaning "a ruler," "director", "chief," "person in charge," "commander." The Greek words **anarchos**, and **anarchia** meant "having no government -- being without a government" [Angeles, Peter A.; **The Harper Collins Dictionary of Philosophy, Second Edition**, pp. 11-12.].

As can be seen, the strict, original meaning of anarchism was not simply "no government." "An-archy" means "without a ruler," or more generally, "without authority," and it is in this sense that anarchists have continually used the word. For this reason, rather than being purely anti-government or anti-state, anarchism is primarily a movement against **hierarchy**. Why? Because hierarchy is the organizational structure that embodies authority. Since the state is the "highest" form of hierarchy, anarchists are, by definition, anti-state; but this is **not** a sufficient definition of anarchism.

Reference to "hierarchy" in this context is a fairly recent development -- the "classical" anarchists did not use the word. However, it's clear from their writings that theirs was a philosophy against hierarchy, against any inequality of power or privileges between individuals. Bakunin spoke of this when attacked "official" authority but defended "natural influence," and also when he said:

"Do you want to make it impossible for anyone to oppress his fellow-man? Then make sure that no one shall possess power" [Maximoff, G. P., ed., **The Political Philosophy of Bakunin: Scientific Anarchism**, p. 271].

As Jeff Draughn notes, *"while it has always been a latent part of the 'revolutionary project,' only recently has this broader concept of anti-hierarchy arisen for more specific scrutiny. Nonetheless, the root of this is plainly visible in the Greek roots of the word 'anarchy'"* [Jeff Draughn,

A.1.2 What does "anarchism" mean?

To quote Peter Kropotkin, Anarchism is *"the no-government system of socialism. . . ."* [**Anarchist Communism: Its Basis and Principles**]. Anarchists maintain that anarchy, the absence of rulers, is a viable form of social system and works for the maximisation of individual liberty and social equality. They see the goals of liberty and equality as mutually self-supporting. Or, in Bakunin's famous dictum:

"We are convinced that freedom without Socialism [i.e. anarchism] is privilege and injustice, and that Socialism without freedom is slavery and brutality."

The history of human society proves this point. Liberty without equality is only liberty for the powerful, and equality without liberty is impossible and a justification for slavery.

Therefore, anarchism is a political theory which advocates the creation of anarchy, a society based on the maxim of *"no rulers."* To achieve this, *"[i]n common with all socialists, the anarchists hold that the private ownership of land, capital, and machinery has had its time; that it is condemned to disappear: and that all requisites for production must, and will, become the common property of society, and be managed in common by the producers of wealth. And. . . they maintain that the ideal of the political organization of society is a condition of things where the functions of government are reduced to minimum. . . (and) that the ultimate aim of society is the reduction of the functions of government to nil -- that is, to a society without government, to an-archy"* [Rudolf Rocker, **Anarcho-syndicalism**].

Thus anarchism is both positive and negative. It analyses and critiques current society while at the same time offering a vision of a potential new society -- a society that maximises certain human needs which the current one denies. These needs, at their most basic, are liberty, equality and solidarity, which will be discussed in section A.2.

Anarchism unites critical analysis with hope, for, as Bakunin pointed out, *"the urge to destroy is a creative urge."* One cannot build a better society without understanding what is wrong with the present one.

A.1.3 Why is anarchism also called libertarian socialism?

Many anarchists, seeing the negative nature of the definition of *"anarchism,"* have used other terms to emphasize the inherently positive and constructive aspect of their ideas. The most common terms used are *"free socialism," "free communism," "libertarian socialism,"* and *"libertarian communism."* For anarchists, libertarian socialism, libertarian communism, and anarchism are virtually interchangeable.

Considering definitions from the **American Heritage Dictionary**, we find:

LIBERTARIAN: *one who believes in freedom of action and thought; one who believes in free will.*

SOCIALISM: *a social system in which the producers possess both political power and the means of producing and distributing goods.*

Just taking those two first definitions and fusing them yields:

LIBERTARIAN SOCIALISM: *a social system which believes in freedom of action and thought and free will, in which the producers possess both political power and the means of producing and distributing goods.*

However, due to the creation of the Libertarian Party in the USA, many people now consider the idea of *"libertarian socialism"* to be a contradiction in terms. Indeed, many "Libertarians" think anarchists are just

attempting to associate the "anti-libertarian" ideas of "socialism" (as Libertarians conceive it) with Libertarian ideology in order to make those "socialist" ideas more "acceptable" -- in other words, trying to steal the "libertarian" label from its rightful possessors.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Anarchists have been using the term "libertarian" to describe themselves and their ideas since the 1890's. It was first used in France in an attempt to get round anti-anarchist laws. Since then, particularly outside America, it has **always** been associated with anarchist ideas and movements. Sebastien Faure and Louise Michel published the paper **Le Libertaire (The Libertarian)** in France in 1895, over 70 years before the US Libertarian Party was created. Taking a more recent example, in the USA, anarchists organised **"The Libertarian League"** in July 1954, which had staunch anarcho-syndicalist principles and lasted until 1965. The US-based "Libertarian" Party, on the other hand has only existed since the early 1970's. It is that party, not the anarchists, who have "stolen" the word. Later, in Section B, we will discuss why the idea of a "libertarian" capitalism (as desired by the Libertarian Party) is a contradiction in terms.

As we will also explain in Section I, only a libertarian-socialist system of ownership can maximise individual freedom. Needless to say, state ownership -- what is commonly **called** "socialism" -- is, for anarchists, not socialism at all. In fact, as we will elaborate in Section H, state "socialism" is just a form of capitalism, with no socialist content whatever.

A.1.4 Are anarchists socialists?

Yes. All the major branches of anarchism are opposed to capitalism, because the latter is based on domination and exploitation (see sections B and C).

Individualists like Ben Tucker along with social anarchists like Proudhon and Bakunin proclaimed themselves "socialists." They did so because the word "socialist" was originally defined to include *"all those who believed in the individual's right to possess what he or she produced"* [*Ayn Rand and the Perversion of Libertarianism*, in **Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed**, no. 34]. In order to achieve this, socialists desire a society within which the producers own and control the means of production. Under capitalism, workers do not govern themselves during the production process nor have control over the product of their labour. Such a situation is hardly based on equal freedom for all and is so opposed by anarchists.

Therefore **all** anarchists are anti-capitalist. Ben Tucker, for example - the anarchist most influenced by liberalism (as we will discuss later) -- denounces the capitalist as *"the usurer, the receiver of interest, rent and profit."* Tucker held that in an anarchist, non-capitalist, free-market society, capitalists will become redundant, since *"labour. . . will. . . secure its natural wage, its entire product."* Such an economy will be based on mutual banking and the free exchange of products between cooperatives, artisans and peasants. Even Max Stirner, the arch-egoist, had nothing but scorn for capitalist society and its various "spooks," which for him meant ideas that are treated as sacred or religious, such as private property, competition, division of labour, and so forth.

So anarchists consider themselves as socialists, but socialists of a specific kind - **libertarian socialists**. As the individualist anarchist Joseph A. Labadie puts it (echoing both Tucker and Bakunin):

"[i]t is said that Anarchism is not socialism. This is a mistake. Anarchism is voluntary Socialism. There are two kinds of Socialism, archistic and anarchistic, authoritarian and libertarian, state and free. Indeed, every proposition for social betterment is either to increase or decrease the powers of external wills and forces over the individual. As they increase they are archistic; as they decrease they are anarchistic." [**Anarchism: What It Is and What It Is Not**]

While social and individualist anarchists do disagree on many issues -- for example, whether a free market would be the best means of maximising liberty -- they agree that capitalism is to be opposed and that an anarchist

society must, by definition, be based on associated, not wage, labour. Only associated labour will "decrease the powers of external wills and forces over the individual" during working hours and such self-management of work by those who do it is the core ideal of real socialism. However, the meanings of words change over time. Today "socialism" almost always refers to **state** socialism, a system that all anarchists have opposed as a denial of freedom and genuine socialist ideals. All anarchists would agree with Noam Chomsky's statement on this issue:

"If the left is understood to include 'Bolshevism,' then I would flatly disassociate myself from the left. Lenin was one of the greatest enemies of socialism" [Red and Black Revolution, issue 2].

Anarchism developed in constant opposition to the ideas of Marxism, social democracy and Leninism. Long before Lenin rose to power, Mikhail Bakunin warned the followers of Marx against the "Red bureaucracy" that would institute "the worst of all despotic governments" if Marx's state-socialist ideas were ever implemented.

Nevertheless, being socialists, anarchists do share **some** ideas with **some** Marxists (though none with Leninists). Both Bakunin and Tucker accepted Marx's analysis and critique of capitalism as well as his labour theory of value (see section C). Marx himself was heavily influenced by Max Stirner's book **The Ego and Its Own**, which contains a brilliant critique of what Marx called "vulgar" communism as well as state socialism. There have also been elements of the Marxist movement holding views very similar to social anarchism (particularly the anarcho-syndicalist branch of social anarchism) -- for example, Anton Pannekoek, Rosa Luxembourg, Paul Mattick and others, who are very far from Lenin. Karl Korsch and others wrote sympathetically of the anarchist revolution in Spain. There are many continuities from Marx to Lenin, but there are also continuities from Marx to more libertarian Marxists, who were harshly critical of Lenin and Bolshevism and whose ideas approximate anarchism's desire for the free association of equals.

Therefore anarchism is basically a form of socialism, one that stands in direct opposition to what is usually defined as "socialism" (i.e. state control). As Daniel Guerin pointed out in his book **Anarchism**, "*Anarchism is really a synonym for socialism. The anarchist is primarily a socialist whose aim is to abolish the exploitation of man by man.*" Instead of "central planning," anarchists advocate free association and oppose "state" socialism as a form of state capitalism. The anarchist objection to the identification of "central planning" with socialism will be discussed in section H.

A.1.5 Where does anarchism come from?

Anarchism was created in, and by, the struggle of the oppressed for freedom. It was not created by a few people divorced from life, in ivory towers looking down upon society and making judgments upon it based on their notions of what is right and wrong. We can do no better than quote the **The Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists** produced by participants of the Makhnovist movement in the Russian Revolution (see Section A.5.4). They point out that:

"[t]he class struggle created by the enslavement of workers and their aspirations to liberty gave birth, in the oppression, to the idea of anarchism: the idea of the total negation of a social system based on the principles of classes and the State, and its replacement by a free non-statist society of workers under self-management.

"So anarchism does not derive from the abstract reflections of an intellectual or a philosopher, but from the direct struggle of workers against capitalism, from the needs and necessities of the workers, from their aspirations to liberty and equality, aspirations which become particularly alive in the best heroic period of the life and struggle of the working masses.

"The outstanding anarchist thinkers, Bakunin, Kropotkin and others, did

not invent the idea of anarchism, but, having discovered it in the masses, simply helped by the strength of their thought and knowledge to specify and spread it."

Like the anarchist movement in general, the Makhnovists were a mass movement of working class people resisting the forces of authority, both Red (Communist) and White (Tzarist/Capitalist) in the Ukraine from 1917 to 1921. As Peter Marshall notes "*anarchism . . . has traditionally found its chief supporters amongst workers and peasants.*" [**Demanding the Impossible**, p. 652]

Anarchism was created in, and by, the struggle of the oppressed for freedom. It comes from the fight for liberty and our desires to lead a fully human life, one in which we have time to live, to love and to play. It was not created by a few people divorced from life, in ivory towers looking down upon society and making judgments upon it based on their notions of what is right and wrong.

In other words, anarchism is an expression of the struggle against oppression and exploitation, a generalisation of working people's experiences and analyses of what is wrong with the current system and an expression of our hopes and dreams for a better future.

A.2 What does anarchism stand for?

These words by Percy Bysshe Shelley gives an idea of what anarchism stands for in practice and what ideals drive it:

**The man
Of virtuous soul commands not, nor obeys:
Power, like a desolating pestilence,
Pollutes whate'er it touches, and obedience,
Bane of all genius, virtue, freedom, truth,
Makes slaves of men, and, of the human frame,
A mechanized automaton.**

As Shelley's lines suggest, anarchists place a high priority on liberty, desiring it both for themselves and others. They also consider individuality -- that which makes one a unique person -- to be a most important aspect of humanity. They recognize, however, that individuality does not exist in a vacuum but is a social phenomenon. Outside of society, individuality is impossible, since one needs other people in order to develop, expand, and grow.

Moreover, between individual and social development there is a reciprocal effect: individuals grow within and are shaped by a particular society, while at the same time they help shape and change aspects of that society (as well as themselves and other individuals) by their actions and thoughts. A society not based on free individuals, their hopes, dreams and ideas would be hollow and dead. Thus, "*the making of a human being. . . is a collective process, a process in which both community and the individual participate*" [Murray Bookchin, **The Modern Crisis**, p. 79]. Consequently, any political theory which bases itself purely on the social or the individual is false.

In order for individuality to develop to the fullest possible extent, anarchists consider it essential to create a society based on three principles: **liberty, equality and solidarity**, which are interdependent.

Liberty is essential for the full flowering of human intelligence, creativity, and dignity. To be dominated by another is to be denied the chance to think and act for oneself, which is the only way to grow and develop one's individuality. Domination also stifles innovation and personal responsibility, leading to conformity and mediocrity. Thus the society that maximises the growth of individuality will necessarily be based on voluntary association, not coercion and authority. To quote Proudhon, "*All associated and all free.*" Or, as Luigi Galleani puts it, anarchism is "*the autonomy of the individual within the freedom of association*" [**The End of Anarchism?**, p. 35] (See further section A.2.2 - Why do anarchists

emphasise liberty?).

If liberty is essential for the fullest development of individuality, then equality is essential for genuine liberty to exist. There can be no real freedom in a class-stratified, hierarchical society riddled with gross inequalities of power, wealth, and privilege. For in such a society only a few -- those at the top of the hierarchy -- are relatively free, while the rest are semi-slaves. Hence without equality, liberty becomes a mockery -- at best the "freedom" to choose one's master (boss), as under capitalism. Moreover, even the elite under such conditions are not really free, because they must live in a stunted society made ugly and barren by the tyranny and alienation of the majority. And since individuality develops to the fullest only with the widest contact with other free individuals, members of the elite are restricted in the possibilities for their own development by the scarcity of free individuals with whom to interact. (See also section A.2.5 - Why are anarchists in favour of equality?)

Finally, solidarity means mutual aid: working voluntarily and cooperatively with others who share the same goals and interests. But without liberty and equality, society becomes a pyramid of competing classes based on the domination of the lower by the higher strata. In such a society, as we know from our own, it's "dominate or be dominated," "dog eat dog," and "everyone for themselves." Thus "rugged individualism" is promoted at the expense of community feeling, with those on the bottom resenting those above them and those on the top fearing those below them. Under such conditions, there can be no society-wide solidarity, but only a partial form of solidarity within classes whose interests are opposed, which weakens society as a whole. (See also section A.2.6 - Why is solidarity important to anarchists?)

It should be noted that solidarity does not imply altruism. As Errico Malatesta makes clear:

"we are all egoists, we all seek our own satisfaction. But the anarchist finds his greatest satisfaction in struggling for the good of all, for the achievement of a society in which he [sic] can be a brother among brothers, and among healthy, intelligent, educated, and happy people. But he who is adaptable, who is satisfied to live among slaves and draw profit from the labour of slaves, is not, and cannot be, an anarchist" [Life and Ideas, page 23].

For anarchists, **real** wealth is other people and the planet on which we live.

Also, honouring individuality does not mean that anarchists are idealists, thinking that people or ideas develop outside of society. Individuality and ideas grow and develop within society, in response to material and intellectual interactions and experiences, which people actively analyze and interpret. Anarchism, therefore, is a **materialist** theory, recognising that ideas develop and grow from social interaction and individuals' mental activity (see Mikhail Bakunin's **God and the State** for the classic discussion of materialism versus idealism).

This means that an anarchist society will be the creation of human beings, not some deity or other transcendental principle, since:

"[n]othing ever arranges itself, least of all in human relations. It is men [sic] who do the arranging, and they do it according to their attitudes and understanding of things" [Alexander Berkman, ABC of Anarchism, page 42].

Therefore, anarchism bases itself upon the power of ideas and the ability of people to act and transform their lives based on what they consider to be right. In other words, liberty.

A.2.1 What is the essence of anarchism?

As we have seen, "an-archy" implies "without (hierarchical) authority." Anarchists are not against "authorities" in the sense of experts who are particularly knowledgeable, skillful, or wise, though they believe that such authorities should have no power to force others to follow their recom-

mendations (see section B.1 for more on this distinction). In a nutshell, then, anarchism is anti-authoritarianism.

Anarchists are anti-authoritarians because they believe that no human being should dominate another. Domination is inherently degrading and demeaning, since it submerges the will and judgment of the dominated to the will and judgment of the dominators, thus destroying the dignity and self-respect that comes only from personal autonomy. Moreover, domination makes possible and generally leads to exploitation, which is the root of inequality, poverty, and social breakdown.

While being anti-authoritarians, anarchists recognise that human beings have a social nature and that they mutually influence each other. We cannot escape the "authority" of this mutual influence, because, as Bakunin reminds us:

"[t]he abolition of this mutual influence would be death. And when we advocate the freedom of the masses, we are by no means suggesting the abolition of any of the natural influences that individuals or groups of individuals exert on them. What we want is the abolition of influences which are artificial, privileged, legal, official" -- in other words which stem from hierarchical authority [quoted by Malatesta, in Anarchy]

A.2.2 Why do anarchists emphasize liberty?

An anarchist can be regarded, in Bakunin's words, as a "*fanatic lover of liberty, considering it as the unique condition under which intelligence, dignity and human happiness can develop and grow. . . .*" [**The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State**]. Because human beings are thinking creatures, to deny them liberty is to deny them the opportunity to think for themselves, which is to deny their very existence as humans. For anarchists, freedom is a product of our humanity, because:

"the very fact. . . that a person has a consciousness of self, of being different from others, creates a desire to act freely. The craving for liberty and self-expression is a very fundamental and dominant trait" [Emma Goldman, Red Emma Speaks, p. 393].

For this reason, anarchism "*proposes to rescue the self-respect and independence of the individual from all restraint and invasion by authority. Only in freedom can man [sic] grow to his full stature. Only in freedom will he learn to think and move, and give the very best of himself. Only in freedom will he realise the true force of the social bonds which tie men together, and which are the true foundations of a normal social life*" [**Ibid.**, p. 59].

As noted already, liberty is the precondition for the maximum development of one's individual potential, which is also a social product and can be achieved only in and through community. A healthy, free community will produce free individuals, who in turn will shape the community and enrich the social relationships between the people of whom it is composed. Liberties, being socially produced, "*do not exist because they have been legally set down on a piece of paper, but only when they have become the ingrown habit of a people, and when any attempt to impair them will meet with the violent resistance of the populace. . . . One compels respect from others when one knows how to defend one's dignity as a human being. This is not only true in private life; it has always been the same in political life as well*" [Rudolf Rocker, **Anarcho-syndicalism**]

In short, liberty develops only within society, not in opposition to it. Thus Murray Bookchin writes: "*What freedom, independence, and autonomy people have in a given historical period is the product of long social traditions and. . . a collective development -- which is not to deny that individuals play an important role in that development, indeed are ultimately obliged to do so if they wish to be free*" [**Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism**].

But freedom requires the right **kind** of social environment in which to grow and develop. Such an environment **must** be decentralised and based on the direct management of work by those who do it. For centralisation means coercive authority, whereas self-management is the essence of free-

dom.

Capitalism, however, is based on centralised authority, the very purpose of which is to keep the management of work out of the hands of those who do it. This means *"that the serious, final, complete liberation of the workers is possible only upon one condition: that of the appropriation of capital, that is, of raw material and all the tools of labor, including land, by the whole body of the workers"* [Michael Bakunin, in Dolgoff, ed., **Bakunin on Anarchism**, p. 255.].

Hence, as Noam Chomsky argues, a *"consistent anarchist must oppose private ownership of the means of production and the wage slavery which is a component of this system, as incompatible with the principle that labor must be freely undertaken and under the control of the producer"* [Notes on Anarchism].

Thus, liberty for anarchists means a non-authoritarian society in which individuals and groups practice self-management, i.e. they govern themselves. The implications of this are important. First, it implies that an anarchist society will be non-coercive, that is, one in which violence or the threat of violence will not be used to "convince" individuals to do anything. Second, it implies that anarchists are firm supporters of individual sovereignty, and that, because of this support, they also oppose institutions based on coercive authority, i.e. hierarchy. And finally, it implies that anarchists' opposition to "government" means only that they oppose centralized, hierarchical, bureaucratic organisations or government. They do not oppose self-government through confederations of decentralized, grassroots organizations, so long as these are based on direct democracy rather than the delegation of power to "representatives." For authority is the opposite of liberty, and hence any form of organisation based on the delegation of power is a threat to the liberty and dignity of the people subjected to that power.

Anarchists consider freedom to be the only social environment within which human dignity and diversity can flower. Under capitalism and statism, however, there is no freedom for the majority, as private property and hierarchy ensure that the inclination and judgment of most individuals will be subordinated to the will of a master, severely restricting their liberty and making impossible the *"full development of all the material, intellectual and moral powers that are latent in each person"* [Bakunin, **Op. Cit.**] (See section B for further discussion of the hierarchical and authoritarian nature of capitalism and statism.)

A.2.3 Are anarchists in favour of organisation?

Yes. Without association, a truly human life is impossible. Liberty **cannot** exist without society and organisation. As George Barrett, in **Objections to Anarchism**, points out:

"[t]o get the full meaning out of life we must co-operate, and to co-operate we must make agreements with our fellow-men. But to suppose that such agreements mean a limitation of freedom is surely an absurdity; on the contrary, they are the exercise of our freedom."

"If we are going to invent a dogma that to make agreements is to damage freedom, then at once freedom becomes tyrannical, for it forbids men to take the most ordinary everyday pleasures. For example, I cannot go for a walk with my friend because it is against the principle of Liberty that I should agree to be at a certain place at a certain time to meet him. I cannot in the least extend my own power beyond myself, because to do so I must co-operate with someone else, and co-operation implies an agreement, and that is against Liberty. It will be seen at once that this argument is absurd. I do not limit my liberty, but simply exercise it, when I agree with my friend to go for a walk."

As far as organisation goes, anarchists think that *"far from creating authority, [it] is the only cure for it and the only means whereby each of us will get used to taking an active and conscious part in collective work, and cease being passive instruments in the hands of leaders"* [Errico Malatesta, **Life and Ideas**].

The fact that anarchists are in favor of organisation may seem strange at first, but this is because we live in a society in which virtually all forms of organisation are authoritarian, making them appear to be the only kind possible. What is usually not recognized is that this mode of organization is historically conditioned, arising within a specific kind of society -- one whose motive principles are domination and exploitation. According to archaeologists and anthropologists, this kind of society has only existed for about 5,000 years, having appeared with the first primitive states based on conquest and slavery, in which the labor of slaves created a surplus which supported a ruling class.

Prior to that time, for hundreds of thousands of years, human and proto-human societies were what Murray Bookchin calls *"organic,"* that is, based on cooperative forms of economic activity involving mutual aid, free access to productive resources, and a sharing of the products of communal labor according to need. Although such societies probably had status rankings based on age, there were no hierarchies in the sense of institutionalized dominance-subordination relations enforced by coercive sanctions and resulting in class-stratification involving the economic exploitation of one class by another [see Murray Bookchin, **The Ecology of Freedom**].

It must be emphasized, however, that anarchists do **not** advocate going "back to the Stone Age." We merely note that since the hierarchical-authoritarian mode of organization is a relatively recent development in the course of human social evolution, there is no reason to suppose that it is somehow "fated" to be permanent. We do not think that human beings are genetically "programmed" for authoritarian, competitive, and aggressive behavior, as there is no credible evidence to support this claim. On the contrary, such behavior is socially conditioned, or **learned**, and as such, can be **unlearned** [see Ashley Montagu, **The Nature of Human Aggression**]. We are not fatalists or genetic determinists, but believe in free will, which means that people can change the way they do things, including the way they organise society.

And there is no doubt that society needs to be better organised, because presently most of its wealth -- which is produced by the majority -- and power gets distributed to a small, elite minority at the top of the social pyramid, causing deprivation and suffering for the rest, particularly for those at the bottom. Yet because this elite controls the means of coercion through its control of the state (see section B.2.3), it is able to suppress the majority and ignore its suffering -- a phenomenon that occurs on a smaller scale within all hierarchies. Little wonder, then, that people within authoritarian and centralised structures come to hate them as a denial of their freedom. As Alexander Berkman puts it:

"capitalist society is so badly organised that its various members suffer: just as when you have a pain in some part of you, your whole body aches and you are ill. . . , not a single member of the organisation or union may with impunity be discriminated against, suppressed or ignored. To do so would be the same as to ignore an aching tooth: you would be sick all over" [Alexander Berkman, **ABC of Anarchism**, p. 53].

Yet this is precisely what happens in capitalist society, with the result that it is, indeed, *"sick all over."*

For these reasons, anarchists reject authoritarian forms of organisation and instead support associations based on free agreement. Free agreement is important because, in Berkman's words, *"[o]nly when each is a free and independent unit, cooperating with others from his own choice because of mutual interests, can the world work successfully and become powerful"* [Op. Cit., p. 53]. In the "political" sphere, this means direct democracy and confederation, which are the expression and environment of liberty. Direct (or participatory) democracy is essential because liberty and equality imply the need for forums within which people can discuss and debate as equals and which allow for the free exercise of what Murray Bookchin calls *"the creative role of dissent."*

Anarchist ideas on libertarian organisation and the need for direct democracy and confederation will be discussed further in sections A.2.9 and A.2.10.

A.2.4 Are anarchists in favour of "absolute" liberty?

No. Anarchists do not believe that everyone should be able to "*do whatever they like*," because some actions invariably involve the denial of the liberty of others.

For example, anarchists do not support the "freedom" to rape, to exploit, or to coerce others. Neither do we tolerate authority. On the contrary, since authority is a threat to liberty, equality, and solidarity (not to mention human dignity), anarchists recognise the need to resist and overthrow it.

The exercise of authority is not freedom. No one has a "right" to rule others. As Malatesta points out, anarchism supports "*freedom for everybody. . . with the only limit of the equal freedom for others; which does **not** mean. . . that we recognise, and wish to respect, the 'freedom' to exploit, to oppress, to command, which is oppression and certainly not freedom.*" [Errico Malatesta, **Life and Ideas**, p. 53].

In a capitalist society, resistance to all forms of hierarchical authority is the mark of a free person -- be it private (the boss) or public (the state). As Henry David Thoreau pointed out in his essay on "**Civil Disobedience**" (1847)

"Disobedience is the true foundation of liberty. The obedient must be slaves."

Our serialization of **An Anarchist FAQ** will continue in the next issue, with a further look at what anarchism stands for.

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